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25 April 1968

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MEMORANDUM FOR:



SUBJECT: U. S. Embassy Review of NIS Drafts

1. OEGI sees the U. S. mission's review of NIS drafts as the most valuable such drafts receive after leaving the contributing producer, and this on three main grounds:

a. For checking the many evaluative statements in a draft, there is no real substitute for the views of the qualified man on the scene. He may actually have access to fewer sources than the intelligence community in Washington, but his potential contribution as a direct observer is unique; for a document that is to go out to a largely non-State Department and non-Foreign Service readership as a national intelligence judgment, the benefit of his insights is needed. Review of the document within the Department is no substitute for such review abroad, for those performing such Departmental review have access essentially to only the same information as the original producer, who in many cases already knows their views from regular intelligence contacts.

b. For catching factual points on which the draft is no longer up to date, or which reflect misunderstandings of the local situation or serious statistical errors, Embassy review has also proved invaluable. Practically all such information is theoretically covered by standard reporting instructions -- and is of course not requested merely for NIS production -- but since most of them may seem of low priority reporting urgency (such as changes in the structure of local government or descriptions of minor opposition parties), embassies in practice tend to postpone reporting such routine and to ignore the specific requirements of Washington intelligence analysis. Correcting a draft NIS covering such points has in numerous instances evidently seemed to the Embassy a less onerous way of conveying this information.

c. Both the above considerations, significantly operative in the past, are almost certain to become markedly more important in the future with the general reduction of reporting from U.S. missions abroad. The loss of the WEEKAs is already being felt.

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2. The following points should also be noted:

a. The review of NIS drafts should not be too onerous a task for any one country. The General Survey which provides single-volume coverage on about 2/3 of the politically autonomous countries of the world is updated on an average of every 4 years. Other elements receiving field review involve on the average only 40 countries and have maintenance cycles ranging from 5 to 10 years. In the mission itself, comments indicate that the draft is normally parcelled out suitably among the various political and economic reporting specialists, labor and agricultural attaches, and so forth, according to subject matter. Since, however, the tie-in among political, sociological, and economic aspects of a situation is frequently close and important, embassy evaluations are particularly useful on such interrelations, as well as on ethnic matters, basic social attitudes, and the roles of labor and management in the society.

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b. The experience of State Department and Foreign Service personnel with reviewing NIS drafts may have left them with only a partial appreciation of the total public at which the NIS must be aimed. Thus, it is not expected that senior political reporting officers in the U.S. Embassy in Paris would turn to the Section 5 of the NIS General Survey on France -- any more than Professor Crane Brinton of Harvard would consult the Encyclopedia for elementary information on Napoleon. The Defense Department, on the other hand, may consider basic orientation on things political in France highly useful; indeed, the U.S. Embassy in Paris may sometimes seriously need an authoritative elementary reference text on Communist China.

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